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ABSTRACT

Book Buddies is a community volunteer tutorial that began in Charlottesville, Virginia in the early 1990s as a cooperative effort between the University of Virginia, the Charlottesville City Schools and the Charlottesville community. A replication of Book Buddies was designed in fall of 1997 for two elementary schools in Millville, Virginia. A study investigated replication of Book Buddies in other cities and school districts. Two different schools were chosen to implement the program and a third school was chosen as a control group that would not in any way participate in the tutorial program. Results showed that Millville students achieved higher mean scores than Charlottesville students in 1992. Book Buddies tutors in Millville received more intensive training, and they also benefited from seven years of fine-tuning of the tutoring format. Results from the three sites (two Millville elementary schools and one control group) suggest that this is indeed a replicable model of an affordable, early intervention program and that significant results can be obtained in high-poverty settings. (SC)

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BOOK BUDDIES REPLICATION STUDY
Ninety Miles From Charlottesville: So What?

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Book Buddies is a community volunteer tutorial that began in Charlottesville, Virginia in the early 90's as a cooperative effort between the University of Virginia, the Charlottesville City Schools and the Charlottesville community. It was one piece in the school district's plan to insure that all children learn to read by the end of third grade. In the program, volunteers tutor first grade children twice a week for forty-five minutes in each of the city's elementary schools. Reading specialists are site coordinators at the schools who assess the students, write lesson plans, and supervise the tutoring sessions. The tutors are recruited for the program by a volunteer coordinator. Charlottesville City Schools administers the program and have fully funded it as part of its school initiative since the third year of operation. Now in its eighth year, data analysis has continued to show the power of this tutoring model as well as the longitudinal success of the program (Invernizzi, Juel, & Rosemary, 1996; Invernizzi, Rosemary, Juel, & Richards, 1997).

In fall of 1997, we designed a replication of Book Buddies for two elementary schools in Millville, Virginia. The project was funded by a grant from the Stuart James Grant Trust to the University of Virginia to assist with a local school district's literacy needs. To determine the success of adapting the program in a different locale, the data from the tutoring programs in Millville were compared to the original parent program in Charlottesville and to a control school within the same school division. The city of Millville is twice the size of Charlottesville and is rated by Market Data Retrieval (1997) as a High-Poverty school system (p. 19). Six of eight elementary schools in Millville operate under "School Improvement" plans because their reading scores fall below the state average. First graders were chosen for the program using the same criteria as in the Charlottesville program (test scores and teacher recommendations) and 89% percent of the students were eligible for free lunch. In this urban extension program, we explored the feasibility of adapting Charlottesville's Book Buddies to another locale. In this adaptation, there were three attributes specific to Millville. The tutorial was embedded in a graduate course, it was an after-school model, and teachers were trained as tutors.

This paper will discuss aspects of the tutoring program that are easier to replicate as they balance with the more difficult to replicate aspects. It will be seen that the lesson plan, the tutoring routine, the coordinator-tutor written interaction, and materials are easier to take from the home site. What is difficult is the ownership of the tutoring program—the responsibility for making it work as a policy within a school district. The former

CS 013 536

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involves instruction. The latter involves placing the instruction within a local culture. The constraints of culture change the visage of the tutoring program.

University Plan: Finding Personnel

As part of the national reading grant (CIERA), we proposed to study the replication of Book Buddies so that we might learn the possibilities for other cities and school districts to replicate it and achieve similar positive results. Although the Millville site was two hours driving time from the University, we planned to extend our reach through university faculty site visits and a cadre of recently trained Masters in Reading Education graduates from the locale who had been intensively trained in this tutorial method for two summers.

We designed a three-hour graduate reading course that would be taught in Millville to train teachers who would become the tutors in this program. Two of the recent graduates would teach the course offered through the School of Continuing Education and be the coordinators at one site and two other recent graduates would be coordinators at the other site. Teachers registered for the course would tutor a child from their own school. Tuition for the graduate course was paid by the grant for up to 24 teachers each semester, fall and spring.

School District Plan: Finding Schools

In the summer before the replication, faculty from the University who were teaching in the summer reading clinic near Millville visited school district administrators to open talks about the proposed grant. Thereafter, two schools were identified by the district as the sites for the replication project. One of the schools (School A) was led by a principal-leader recognized for his dedication to children's performance. The principal of School B was having difficulty with faculty and parents at her school. Both principals participated in planning stages with the same intensity, however. A third school (School C) was identified as the control school, with the understanding that this school would be the site of the next replication (the plan was to increase the number of schools participating by two each year).

The Means of Tutor Training: A Graduate Reading Course

The course selected for use in the replication was the three-hour graduate course entitled Early Intervention: Preventing Reading Problems. This course has been taught and revised many times since its inception in 1995. Teachers in this course watch videotapes of emergent and beginning readers who are having difficulty learning to read and design lessons to help those children. In several sites in the state, teachers also tutor a child for 6 weeks as part of their course experience. In other sites, they write simulated lesson plans that are critiqued by their course instructors, all of whom had been trained in this method of instruction. Since this course was created to use in conjunction with intensive tutoring, the course syllabus for the Millville Book Buddies project was adjusted. In their course,

teachers received four weeks of in-class training at the beginning of the semester and then tutored twice a week for the remainder of the semester. Discussions and lectures were held on the second day of class each week after the tutorial.

Course Instructors/Coordinators

Course instructors and coordinators came to Charlottesville for two days for training. The first time, they came with building administrators to visit the Book Buddies sites, attend the tutor training session, and plan with University faculty. The second time, instructors and coordinators came to an all-day training session where the Book Buddies coordinators and university faculty trained them how to administer the assessments used in the Charlottesville program.

At the planning meetings, faculty, administrators, and coordinators organized their work to support the project. It was decided that faculty at the University would oversee the dispersal of the grant budget, order books and materials for delivery to the two schools, organize the data collection, and act as a resource to the coordinators throughout the school year. Administrators would work within their own schools to identify teachers who would take the course and to select the children who would be the best candidates for tutoring. Coordinators were assigned to assess all of the selected children, create materials and tutoring boxes, and organize the books.

Teachers/Tutors

The school district issued a bulletin advertising the course after school began in September. One of the project faculty also agreed to do a half-day workshop for all teachers in both schools to build teacher interest in the project and to prepare classroom teachers for the types of instructional activities children would be receiving. After the workshop, twelve teachers from School A enrolled in the course and several more from this school were placed on the waiting list for spring; 9 teachers from School B registered. No teachers from the control school were allowed to register in the course. In total, 19 teachers from 2 schools enrolled in the Early Intervention course that began in late September. All participants were female classroom teachers except one.

Tutoring Sites

The teachers attended their Early Intervention class for four weeks prior to the start-up of tutoring. After several weeks of this instruction, tutorials started taking place during class time on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. On Thursday afternoons, the teachers stayed for class discussions and lectures related to their tutorials. During the tutorials, the course instructors supervised at School B and the two other coordinators not involved with the class supervised tutors at School A.

Coordinators at both sites wrote the lesson plans for the children being tutored and supervised the teachers who implemented the tutoring. The lesson plans followed the Book Buddies format and the tutorials were taught in the same time frame (45 minutes).

Each school had a complete set of *Ready Readers* (Modern Curriculum Press, 1996) and the supplies matched those used in Charlottesville. Unlike the Charlottesville Book Buddies program, which operates during the school day, children in Schoo A and B were tutored using an after school model.

Finding Volunteers

In School A, federal work-study students from a nearby four-year private liberal arts college began "shadowing" teacher-tutors early in the semester. Because the money funding these students came to the college via the America Reads initiative, these undergraduate students were considered America Reads volunteers. The plan was that when the course was finished, the volunteer tutors would continue tutoring under the direction of the teachers who had completed the course. The teachers would then become the coordinators. At School B, there were few, if any attempts to recruit volunteers to shadow the tutors or become tutors after the class ended.

Mid-Year Adjustment

In December, after the first semester of tutoring (and after the course was completed), a meeting was held in Millville between the University faculty, central office staff, and building principals to discuss the future of the project. The meeting was held at School A. Within two days of this meeting, the administrator of a third school (School D) proposed that her school should host the next graduate course during the second semester, which would mean that children at School D would be tutored during spring. She used school money to purchase an additional set of books and supplies for her school and thirty-nine teachers pre-registered for the course, most of them teachers at School D.

Since the purpose of the local grant was to facilitate school district change, the project faculty agreed to the plan, with the caveat that the grant budget would cover the expenses at two sites. The coordinators paid by the grant would be located at School A and School D, with the instructors of the course moving from School B to School D for spring. Since the enrollment in the course was so large, the teachers at School D were paired for their tutoring and worked with 20 children. Another instructional change that was put in place related to assessments and lesson plans. Teachers at School D assessed their students and wrote their own lesson plans.

The central office decided that School B would continue the program with district support (the district would pay for a new coordinator to write lesson plans). School A continued their tutorials using a combination of teachers who had been trained in the fall course and America Reads volunteers, under the supervision of the same two coordinators. The coordinators continued writing lesson plans for those tutors who had not participated in the Early Intervention course and their tutorials continued until the end of the school year.

Further Complications

In planning for School D's tutoring, other complications arose for the course instructors. This school was a year-round school. This meant that several weeks into the semester and again later in the semester, the school day changed to the hiatus schedules. It would, at the outset, appear that hiatus weeks would be perfect for intensive tutoring, which is what usually occurs in year-round schools' interim weeks. But this did not happen in School D for a variety of reasons. Scheduling complications caused us to continue tutoring beyond the last day of class for the purpose of providing the children with 40 tutoring sessions. Coordinators continued supervising until the last assessment. Twenty children were tutored for at least forty sessions at School D.

Results

Coordinators and certified teachers administered the assessment battery to 10 first grade Book Buddies students at School A and 20 first-grade students at School D at three intervals across the school year. Eighteen first grade students from a control school were also assessed at three intervals across the school year. Data was collected, entered and compared to the first-year cohort (1992-1993) of the Charlottesville program as well as to the control school within the same district. We compared the Millville pilot to the first year of the Charlottesville program because both years were "start-up" years.

A comparison of means on three identical measures (alphabet recognition, spelling, and oral reading in context) showed that Millville students achieved higher mean scores than Charlottesville students did in 1992. In addition, Millville students participating in the Book Buddies after-school tutorials had significantly better end-of-year scores on the total assessment package than students in the control school ($\underline{f} = 6.98$; $p = .012$). Examination of the means at each of the two experimental schools indicated that one site was much more successful than the other was.

Several variables may explain the results. Book Buddies tutors in Millville received more intensive training, more like what is given to graduate students in methods courses. Millville also benefited from seven years of fine-tuning of the tutoring format and from the course that had been written to help disseminate this information to other teachers in the state.

Variables and Limitations

There are also several variables that restricted this first formal replication. First and foremost was the lack of "buy-in" on the part of the school district. From the beginning, Millville central office administrators were unable to articulate a "vision" for their district's reading program. The district was intent on identifying "focus" schools; each elementary school was encouraged to develop its own guiding principle. One school followed a Success for All model; one was year-round; one was developing multi-age grouping. But none of them coordinated their reading programs or were able to keep

track of children who were transient within the system. The problem can also be seen in the district's original selection of School B as a tutoring site. School B's building administrator was in a crisis situation within the district yet her school was allowed to be selected for the project. This was a potential embarrassment for the school district and caused considerable upset when the adjustment occurred mid-year. In addition, the adjustment endangered data collection—a point that the school district did not seem to appreciate.

What We've Learned

For better transition to local control in a replication project of this type, it appears necessary to have school district commitment, especially in situations when grant money facilitates start-up. There also needs to be a plan in place for continuation beyond year one with time-lines that are re-visited periodically for accuracy. In reality, replication or implementation of any program demands more than one-year start-up.

While differences between experimental and control groups at the 3 different sites may confound comparisons, the mean difference obtained for the Book Buddies schools suggests that this is indeed a replicable model of an affordable, early intervention and that significant results can be obtained in high-poverty settings. Additional funding would allow us to continue the replication and to explore issues that may explain the differences between the two experimental schools.

The local culture changes the "look" of the imported program in relation to the ease of transition of the new information and the "fit" of the tutoring program to the school district's expectations. Primarily, however, it is the building principal's ability to lead his or her faculty and involve parents in a new initiative that determines success or failure of implementation. From our experience with this project, we suggest that future replication should be undertaken on a school by school basis. Intense focus should occur in one key school where all the components necessary for the tutoring program are judged to be in place. Once success has been demonstrated, then a second school can be added, but only when all components necessary for success are in place there as well. Looking back, this is exactly the way the original Book Buddies program began--in the back of one first grade classroom in one elementary school.